

# Exploring Corruption in the Public Procurement Systems in South Africa: Towards Achieving Sustainable Development Goal (10 Reduced Inequalities)

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OIDA International Journal of Sustainable Development, Ontario International Development Agency, Canada.

ISSN 1923-6654 (print) ISSN 1923-6662 (online) [www.oidaijsd.com](http://www.oidaijsd.com)

Also available at <http://www.ssrn.com/link/OIDA-Intl-Journal-Sustainable-Dev.html>

**Abstract:** Government corruption has been the root of poor service delivery in developing countries. This article focuses on corruption, its causes, and effects on procurement systems in South African local government. The paper argues that corruption is widening the economic gap between the rich and the poor, which reverses the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 10, which aims to reduce inequalities. The paper adopts a literature review analysis to establish the existence of corruption in local government procurement systems, which have caused socio-economic disparities in communities. The paper observes that the lack of good ethical conduct, the legacy of apartheid, the lack of knowledge and skills on procurement, lack of monitoring and evaluation structures, and political appointments trigger corruption in local government procurement systems. The paper concludes that corruption in the local government procurement systems is ever-growing, leading to further impoverishment of many citizens in communities. Corruption further increases socio-economic inequalities, which is a step backwards towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 10.

**Keywords:** Good governance, inequalities, procurement systems, public sector corruption, sustainable development goals

## Introduction

Public procurement systems in many developing countries are under bureaucratic ‘siege’ as they are riddled with various limitations associated with manipulation and largely corrupt tendencies that demonstrate the absence of good governance (Komakech 2016; Musanzikwa 2013; Williams 2018). South Africa is one of the thriving democracies that is not spared from the growing public procurement scourge that sees local municipalities failing to effectively render public goods and services in their jurisdictions. The persistent challenges encountered in public procurement have adverse effects in the attempt to achieve SDG 10, which aims at reducing inequalities and poverty, which is also aligned with the country's National Development Plan Vision 2030. Although curbing poverty is at the forefront of many local municipalities in South Africa, a considerable body of literature on public sector procurement systems believes that the legacy of apartheid brought about a fragmented and disjointed local government marred by corruption, which discourages effective development of local government (Caldwell Roebrich & Davies 2009; Franks 2014; Mafunisa 2000; Musanzikwa 2013). Although many years of apartheid rule have ended, this common narrative is recurring in local government literature, probably due to the spatial inequalities that exist to date, which other scholars believe render local municipalities ineffective when it comes to equitable service delivery.

In his study, Nengwekhulu (2009:344) amplified this view, arguing that, in redistributing wealth to the black majority, the post-1994 administration encountered numerous challenges, such as skills shortage and corruption, which affected the smooth transition in turning around the public service. Although scholars portray former apartheid problems as causes, modern studies in public procurement dispute this view by branding local government supply chain systems as being exposed to corruption, which is believed to be a deterrent towards achieving SDG 10.

In South Africa's local government, corruption is increasing and negatively affecting the development and growth of the country. It is blocking the socio-economic environment from thriving and affecting the public procurement processes, which results in weak poverty-related interventions and a high rate of unemployment. All these woes widen

inequalities, resulting in municipal challenges towards achieving SDG 10 (refer to Department of Public Service and Administration [DPSA] 2008:2)

The paper acknowledges various studies (Ambe and Baden-Horst-Weiss, 2012; Mafunisa, 2013; Public Service Commission [PSC] 2013; Thornhill 2012) conducted in South Africa on public sector corruption, although they did not give much emphasis on procurement corruption, which shows a gap that still needs to be filled to enhance public procurement systems. The studies have shown that the effects of corruption in South African local government, if not contained, can trigger poverty and unemployment, which may hinder the government's efforts to achieve good governance and SDG 10.

It can be considered that municipal offices are mandated to deliver services within their areas of jurisdiction, hence require assistance from administrative units dealing with public procurement processes. However, it is also known that due to the nature of requirements and outcomes of procurement systems, involving tenders and financial transactions, it can be used as a medium for misconduct and corruption (refer to Basheka 2008:381; and Ambe & Baden-Horst-Weiss 2012:11005). To combat corruption and enhance accountability, the public procurement system and processes have undergone reforms to bring new procurement systems that are more refined and defined. This may also be discussed under the premises of new public management, promoting new initiatives for public administration/management tasks. The rationale for embarking on reforms emanates from the desire to exercise good governance in service delivery. Given this background, the paper answers the following questions: What are the causes of corruption in public procurement and how do they hinder the attainment of SDG 10? and which alternative pathways can be implemented to enhance public procurement systems and achieve SDG 10 in South African municipalities?

After the introduction, the study methodology is discussed, followed by the review of corruption in South African procurement systems. The next section focuses on the classification of corruption in Public Procurement Systems while analysing how it affects the achievement of SDG 10. The section analyses the policy context for curbing corruption in the public procurement Systems and discusses the efforts to Combat Public Procurement Corruption and Pathways to SDG 10. The last section concludes this study, discusses the study's contribution and offers actionable recommendations on how to enhance public procurement in the South African public sector.

### **Methodology**

The study is qualitative and based on a desktop analysis of secondary information. Therefore, a document review was considered appropriate for the study. Documents can offer additional research data, and a document review offers a platform for two or more approaches to interact and support one another. Because papers offer a way to track development and change, the insights and information they yield can be useful additions to data collected in other ways (Bowen 2009:27-29). If available, the researcher can also compare different drafts of a given document to find the changes. Additionally, documents can be analysed to validate conclusions or support evidence from many sources (Bowen 2009:27-29). The information was gathered from official documents of Transparency International; Corruption Watch and Public Service Commission to compile timely and relevant data.

### **Corruption in Public Procurement and SDG 10**

SDG 10 seeks to reduce inequalities in income, with indicators that focus on gender, ethnicity, religion, race, demography, and household socio-economic status (United Nations [UN] 2015; United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] 2020; World Bank [WB] 2021). The goal aims to mitigate disparities both within and among countries, linking them to broader issues such as migration, representation, and development assistance. In its effort to support more equitable economic recovery, Target 10.1 specifically envisions that the incomes of the poorest 40% of the population should grow faster than the national average target, backed by evidence from 56 of 94 countries between 2007 and 2012 (UN 2015; UNDP 2020). Despite this ambition, many states continue to struggle due to entrenched poverty, exclusion from global economic opportunities, and challenges such as conflict and declining labour markets (Sachs 2015; International Monetary Fund [IMF] 2020).

In the South African context, reducing inequality has been a central policy agenda since the democratic transition in 1994. The government has implemented radical redress mechanisms such as Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and Affirmative Action, aimed at addressing structural inequalities created under apartheid and uplifting historically disadvantaged groups (Shava 2016; Tangri & Southall 2008). Through developmental local government structures, these measures also extend into areas such as public procurement, where policies aim to prioritise women, youth, and previously marginalised entrepreneurs (Pieterse 2002; Khumalo et al. 2017). However, the effectiveness of such interventions has been undermined by persistent corruption at the municipal level, which diverts resources away from rightful beneficiaries and limits progress in tackling inequality (Basheka 2008; Lodge 2014; Madonsela 2016). As

Basheka (2008:380) observes, corruption is “disastrous to the proper functioning of any government department” because it shifts decision-making and resources away from vulnerable communities most in need

### **Corruption in the Procurement Systems- A South African Perspective**

Corruption has become a scourge in public procurement systems that has devastating consequences on service delivery in communities. Thornhill (2012:140) describes corruption as the “offering or granting, directly or indirectly to a public official or any other person, of any goods of monetary value, or other benefit, such as a gift, favour, promise or advantage for himself or herself or for any other person or entity, in exchange for any acts or omission in the performance of his/her public functions”. Mlinga (2005:8) warns that corrupt practices include the illegal soliciting and receiving of any valuable thing by a public official in the procurement and contract execution processes. The author (Mlinga 2005) cautions that government policy often requires contractors and consultants to adhere to the highest ethical standards when procuring for local government tenders. In municipalities, fraudulent activities are rampant in procurement systems where facts are misrepresented with the motive to cheat and manipulate the selection and execution criteria of a contract. Such corrupt tendencies are often harmful to the accounting authorities that might have been robbed of free and open competition when procuring goods and services (Mlinga 2005). The escalating level of corruption contributes to socio-economic inequalities, especially in those historically disadvantaged communities, hence attaining SDG 10 can be a challenge.

Madonsela (2010:1) asserts that “corruption and good governance sit at the opposite ends of the spectrum”. This proclamation provides a picture where corporations, nations or individual organisations can be caught in corrupt activities, which are a growing problem difficult to control. In many cases, corruption entails the abuse of power for personal gain. In South African local government, corruption is getting widely spread in the procurement systems, which are detrimental to reducing inequalities and achieving inclusive growth, as documented in Sustainable Development Goal 10.

### **Classification of Corruption in South Africa**

Depending on the perspective or method used, corruption in the South African public sector can be viewed or classified in several ways (Mafunisa 2007:261). Even the public and other high bureaucratic entities are typically quite familiar with corruption. Corruption is commonly understood to be the flagrant misuse of power or position for one's own benefit or the benefit of associates' political allies (Pauw, Woods, Van der Linde, Fourie & Visser 2009: 344).

Technology has created complicated issues for public organisations in the South African public sector regarding how to combat corruption with contemporary tools. Since the public has a say in how public policies are made, Tiihonen (2003:3) notes that as the need for democratic participation in the nation's administration grows, public sector officials are being forced to reduce corruption.

The decline in trust among state institutions causes corruption to increase due to weak accountability mechanisms (Kanyane 2013). Madonsela's statement denounces corruption in its broadest sense since it jeopardises the very existence of public administration and service delivery. To ordinary citizens, the term corruption is associated with high-level bureaucrats in government, where they abuse state resources for personal aggrandisement. In most cases, corruption entails the abuse of a strategic position for personal benefit (Thornhill 2006). In most cases, corruption involves public officials and private individuals who illegally indulge in unethical deals that involve the theft of organisational resources and negatively affect service delivery. Therefore, corruption in the public sector involves “a diversion from the set or accepted norms in the course of the performance of one's public duties, for selfish personal gain” (Bitarabeho 2003).

### **Corruption in Public Procurement Systems and SDG 10**

Various factors affect the local government's capacity to exercise proper procurement procedures to ensure the equitable distribution of resources. The status of corruption in the South African public sector, which has quickly emerged as the primary reason for subpar service delivery in communities, is a major topic of Madonsela's (2010) speech at the Nigeria Conference. Van de Merwe (2006:32) argues that “effective anti-corruption measures should consider both the nature and causes of public sector corruption”.

Corruption in the South African public sector results from poor accountability and transparent mechanisms. Mahlaba and Munzhedzi (2013:284) lament over the huge amount of taxpayers' money which is lost annually due to corruption. Pillay (2004:589) and Ristey (2010:348) maintain further that, because governmental departments are poorly designed or have institutional flaws, corruption has thrived. Although it hinders socioeconomic growth because resources are

either misused or mismanaged, particularly at the local government level, corruption is becoming more commonplace in South African public departments.

Since gaining democratic status in 1996, corruption has been on the rise in South Africa. The Corruption Perceptions Index, which rates nations and territories according to how corrupt their public sectors are perceived to be, provides figures that support this claim. From 0 (extremely corrupt) to 100 (very clean), a nation or territory's score represents the perceived degree of public sector corruption (Trading Economics 2025), see Table 1.

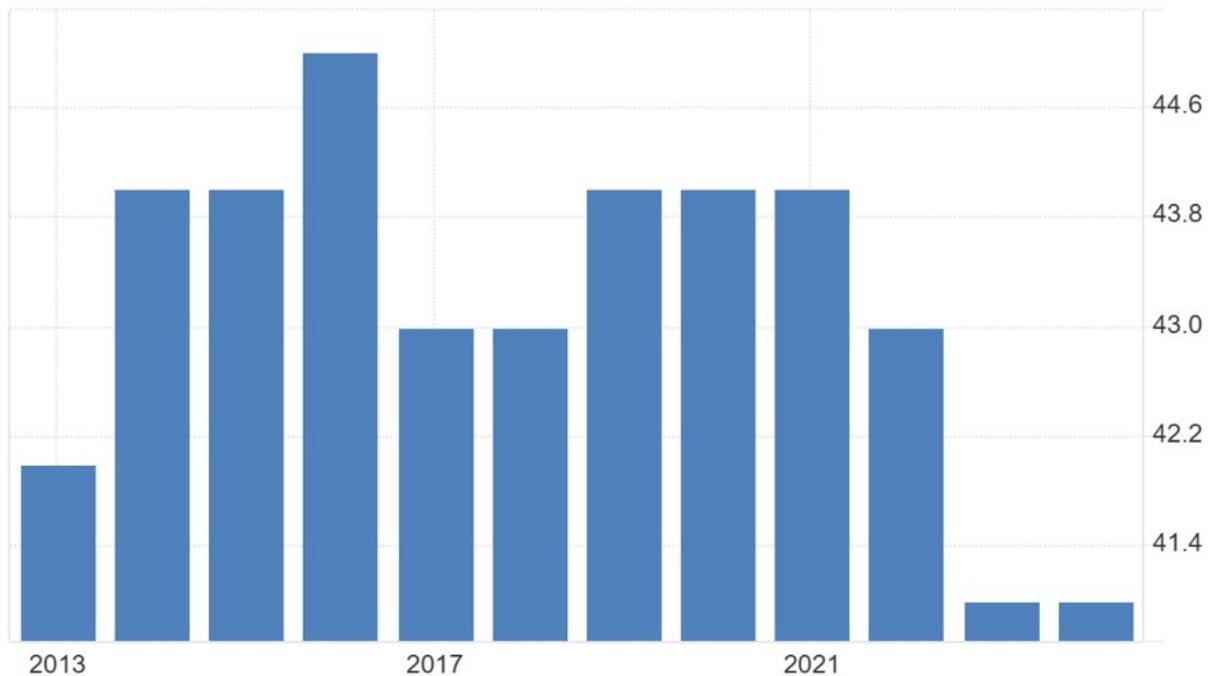
**Table 1: South Africa Corruption Index**

Actual	Previous	Highest	Lowest	Dates	Unit	Frequency
41.00	41.00	56.80	41.00	1996 - 2024	Points	Yearly

Source: Trading Economics 2025.

According to Transparency International's (2025) most recent data, South Africa received 41 points out of 100 on the organisation's 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index. With a peak of 56.80 points in 1996 and a low of 41.00 points in 2011, South Africa's Corruption Index averaged 45.84 points from 1996 to 2024, see Figure 1.

**Figure 1: South Africa Corruption Index**



Source: Trading Economics 2025.

Bribery, fraud, nepotism, favouritism, misuse of power and authority, and misuse of resources, to name a few, are all considered forms of corruption in South Africa. These descriptions are in contrast with what SDG 10 aims to achieve, which calls for renewed government efforts to ensure that local governments become responsive to the demands of the citizens, as prescribed in various legislative frameworks. According to the 2016 Corruption Perceptions Index released by Transparency International, South Africa received 45 points out of 100 (Krsteski 2017:49). Following the end of apartheid, South Africa was ranked as the 23rd least corrupt country. The drastic drop in ranks from 69th to

83rd least corrupt state in 2021–2023 most likely was caused by a high-profile Procurement fraud related to COVID-19 (Bond 2024).

### **Persistent political interference**

Municipalities in South Africa are major actors in reducing inequalities at the local scale. Their mandated role is somehow affected by institutional factors related to corruption, financial mismanagement and largely political interference. A study by Dza, Fischer and Gapp (2013:53), reports that procurement systems have been constrained by political interference, which creates room for corruption and mismanagement. The same study argues that political appointments or cadre deployment in the case of South Africa can trigger corruption in local government. The study done by Reddy, Naidoo & Pillay (2005:49, 50) corroborates the observations, revealing that senior appointments from the upper echelons of government lead to corruption and underperformance as the appointed person lacks the quality and expertise to effectively render services. Shava (2016a) argues that local government tenders are often diverted by political figures to friends, family, or close political affiliates. Corruption and fraud that took place in local government through poor procurement management and control are causing untold suffering to communities, as they lack basic services (Moeti 2014). Achieving SDG 10 amid corruption in local government presents numerous challenges that include widening the poverty gap and underdevelopment in several communities. The World Bank (2022) admitted that South Africa, one of the most unequal nations in the world, may hinder the achievement of SDG 10 if social and economic disparities are not addressed. This observation further resonates with public procurement literature in South Africa, which attests to growing disparities that ruin the capacity of local municipalities to equitably render public services.

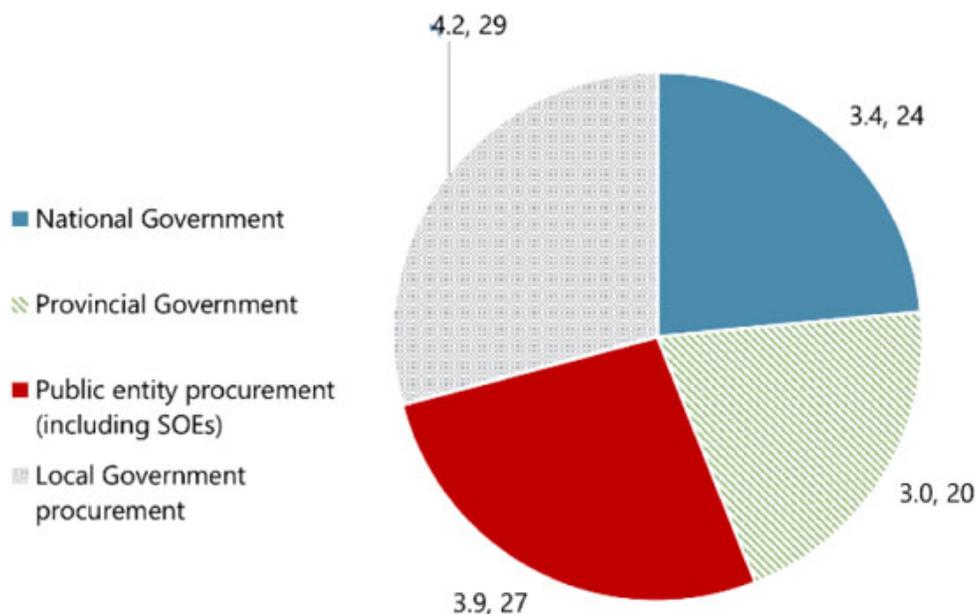
### **Lack of transparency and accountability**

The foundation of any successful organisation is accountability/answerability and transparency/openness of procedures and systems. High levels of bureaucracy in South African local government have impeded transparency regarding the procurement processes. Van Der Waldt and Du Toit (2007:49) assert that unethical behaviour is the root source of corruption in local government, and that corruption is difficult to manage and hold accountable; if control is ineffective, dishonest officials might take advantage of the situation for their own benefit. Some school of thought suggests that corruption in the public sector is caused by a lack of incentives, promotions and performance bonuses, poor budgeting strategies, and a lack of transparency and accountability (Pillay 2004; Ristey 2010).

### **Failure to adhere to procurement policies and processes**

Gross ethical misconduct has been a challenge associated with local government procurement systems in South Africa. Shava (2016), in his study, attests to the findings when he affirms the escalating corruption and failure to adhere to ethical codes of conduct in procurement systems. In many cases, policies and procedures are not followed due to fronting of tenders in local government, which is a barrier to effective service delivery in communities and a hindrance to the attainment of SDG 10 in South Africa, see Figure 2.

Next page

**Figure 2: Procurement Spending**

Source: Simone and Balasundharam 2023.

According to Figure 2, during fiscal year 2021–2022, public procurement expenditures accounted for 15% of GDP. The national government accounted for the remaining 24% of public procurement spending, with the remaining 76% coming from local, provincial, and public bodies, including major SOEs like Eskom (electricity) and Transnet (logistics) (Simone and Balasundharam 2023).

Dzuke and Naude (2015) concur that challenges emanating from public procurement systems detract from the capacity of municipalities to effectively deliver services. In local government, a lack of compliance with legislation and supply management procedures affects standardisation as well as the moral integrity of officials, which results in incompetence and institutional disrepute.

#### Limited skills and knowledge of procurement

The services at the municipal government level require the use of public procurement to promote businesses and local entrepreneurs. However, it requires skills, competence, and knowledge regarding the procurement processes to consider for the mutual benefit of all stakeholders. The understanding of procurement processes, systems, and procedures is imperative to utilise their benefits. This has been confirmed by Ambe and Badenhorst-Weiss (2012) in their study, when they observed the lack of skills to conduct demand management due to poor planning in linking the budget to demand management. Licenji (2015:239) reiterates that the shortage of skills, including expertise, affects public procurement, hence government officials are failing to provide value for money through effective service provision. Such a deficit in skills has led to local government challenges related to corruption and inconsistencies in procurement procedures, which indicate poor monitoring and evaluation (Luyt 2008). Therefore, the local government needs to enhance skills development, especially in the budget formulation area, to enhance service delivery, which may also translate to the achievement of SDG 10.

#### Corruption in the procurement systems

According to Madonsela (2010), in South Africa, many people get rich quickly using the procurement systems, which are often manipulated to suit the needs of certain groups. Bolton (2006:193) affirms that the Constitution of South Africa provides for the need to conduct public procurement, which acts as a means of addressing the social injustices perpetrated by the former apartheid regime. Procurement, as Ambe & Badenhorst Weiss (2012:242) believe, is regarded as a central aspect of government service delivery. Procurement involves the conduct of business between a service provider and a client in a reasonable time frame at reasonable pricing and quality through a contract (Ababio, Vyas-Doorgapersad & Mzini 2008:10). When conducting public procurement, government enters contracts with private service providers to supply goods and services at a needed time (Arrowsmith 2010:1). Many challenges

illuminate in public procurement as non-compliance with legislation is the main scourge couple with irregularities among government departments (Moeti 2014:141). Madonsela criticised the quick get-rich scheme in local government, where procurement systems are used as vehicles for accumulating huge amounts of wealth. Madonsela lamented that:

“Procurement-related corruption needs urgent attention. It eats all our resources through shady work, overcharging and false billing. It also destroys genuine entrepreneurship.”

The above assertion mimics the dangers of corruption in public procurement systems as it disrupts not only societal values but public sector entrepreneurship as well. In most procurement systems, as Ambe & Badenhorst-Weiss (2012:243) concur, numerous factors such as corruption, negligence, nepotism, and incompetence are rife, and these lead to poor service provision in communities. Corruption in public procurement systems in many institutions results from poor ethical leadership and mismanagement (Ambe & Badenhorst-Weiss 2012:245). As a result, Mahmood (2010:103) advises that some states have adopted some steps to utilise annual procurement plans as long-term solutions to strategise the need and management control of the procurement systems.

Several cases of corruption have been recorded in South Africa, and they occur at the three levels of government, with the local government dominating the most. For example, the Eskom Procurement Fraud reported by Business Day (2022), where the state-owned enterprise Eskom became the epicentre of corruption, where several procurement contracts were unlawfully awarded to Gupta-linked companies such as Tegeta Exploration and Resources. The report from the Zondo Commission (2022) revealed that Contracts were manipulated to benefit Tegeta for low-quality coal at inflated prices. Some executives were found to be enabling corruption, which somehow contributes to load shedding issues due to the poor financial and operational health of Eskom. While the details relating to public procurement may be subject to debate, we argue that achieving SGD 10 amid public sector corruption is a challenge, and it has adverse effects on various economic sectors in South Africa. Mitigating government corruption, in this case, is key to ensuring that key government agencies such as Eskom remain operational to drive economic growth and achieve not only SDG 10 but the NDP Vision 2030 as well.

The COVID-19 Public Procurement Equipment (PPE) Procurement Scandal (2020) exemplifies the dangers of bypassing procurement systems in South Africa. Research has demonstrated that during the COVID-19 pandemic, emergency procurement regulations were abused across national and provincial departments (eNCA 2021). Reports from the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) (2021) revealed public procurement deficits, as R14 billion was flagged in contracts. Key among these forms of corruption are the inflated prices, non-compliant service providers, and misuse of emergency procurement protocols. The SIU Findings on this matter revealed that 2,803 PPE-related contracts were investigated, and many were found to be fraudulent (SIU 2021). This is another typical example of how public procurement corruption hurts the achievement of SDG 10, as resources are supposed to be equitably utilised to benefit the majority.

### **Analysis of the policy context for curbing corruption in the public procurement systems**

Corruption in public procurement in South Africa is regulated by several legal frameworks that can be utilised as anti-corruption measures in the public procurement systems; however, due to unethical conduct, these frameworks are often abused or misinterpreted. A detailed exposition of these legal frameworks has been presented below:

Section 217(3) of The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) legislates the national sphere of government to establish a regulation to implement the preferential procurement policy. The three spheres of government, as Ambe and Badenhorst-Weiss (2012:247) observe, need to exercise good procurement procedures in their respective departments in an equitable, transparent and accountable manner. Nonetheless, corruption and mismanagement of the entire procurement procedures saw the local government losing a lot of funds to corrupt related activities that derail service delivery and attainment of SDG 10 aims to reduce inequalities.

The Prevention of Corrupt Activities Act, 2004 (PCCA) is one of the key frameworks guiding the avoidance of corruption in the public sector. Though not directed towards SDG 10, this aims to curb corrupt activities against persons and businesses in line with contracts and tenders. This framework formulates a register which restricts such corrupt activities from taking place, although officials always bypass it when it comes to procurement systems (Ambe & Badenhorst-Weiss 2012:249). Penalties related to corruption cases and the establishment of a register for tender defaulters are enshrined in Chapter 4 of the PCCA. Further attempts to curb corruption are governed by Chapter 5 of the Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act, 2004 (Act 12 of 2004). If this legislation is adequately implemented, chances are high that public procurement corruption can be minimised in local government, which may ultimately lead to the achievement of SDG 10.

The Municipal Finance Management (Act 56 of 2003) is one of the frameworks that aims to improve compliance, transparency and accountability in the procurement systems in local government. It targets supply chain procedures that are prone to fraud and corruption, as defined by Municipal Supply Chain Management Regulation 2.1. To provide effective and efficient services, the policy aims to stop supply chain malpractices that have a detrimental influence on prudent financial management. This framework is useful in advising officials to exercise high ethical standards in the procurement systems that promote trust and respect in the public eye. Observance of fair practices can enable the country to work towards SDG 10, where inequalities can be reduced in communities.

### **Efforts to Combat Public Procurement Corruption and Pathways to SDG 10**

This section discusses the results obtained from the literature review analysis.

#### **Chapter 9 Institutions and SDG 10**

South Africa is one of the few countries in Southern Africa with advanced anti-corruption institutions and tools, which involve the Special Investigating Unit (SIU), the National Treasury's restricted suppliers' database, and the Special Tribunal. In addition, the Auditor General and Public Protector's offices exist in chapter nine of the South African constitution of 1996 as watchdogs for curbing public sector corruption; however, when it comes to public sector procurement, many cases happening especially at local government do not always lead to prosecution, showing the absence of consequence management (Shava, Muringa & Oladejo 2025). Although South Africa scores high (87.76) in the Global Data Barometer 2025 for publishing machine-readable data, public procurement corruption is a growing concern that affects public service delivery. Initiatives like Corruption Watch's Procurement Watch tool aggregate data to enhance accountability, which is commendable given the rise in public procurement corruption. For instance, in the Western Cape, the implementation of effective policies for curbing corruption through transparency and technology, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and blockchain, is being considered. To advance SDG 10, recommendations include strengthening ethical leadership, capacity building, central oversight, and consequence management to ensure resources reach the disadvantaged. Addressing corporate involvement and political interference is crucial for promoting inclusivity in public procurement systems, which may assist in the achievement of SDG 10.

#### **Policy framework for mitigating corruption in the procurement systems**

Whereas it has become popularly acceptable in local government in South Africa that corruption is the order of the day, the enabling legal frameworks can be useful if well implemented. The various rules and regulations governing the public sector are often abused due to unethical conduct, lack of transparency, failure to adhere to Batho-Pele Principles and accountability, especially in the public procurement systems. Despite the availability of comprehensive legislation and measures, as Ambe and Badenhorst-Weiss (2011:1112) observe, the public sector in South Africa still experiences fraud and corruption in the public procurement processes. Various municipalities have been experiencing misuse of funds despite the availability of enabling legal provisions. The lack of public accountability to explain the use of taxpayers' money is another hindrance to achieving a developmental state (Agere 2007:7; Peters & Pierre 2003:583). Using the legal frameworks provided, procurement officers need to justify their decisions made in the supply chain process, which is a fundamental step towards openness and transparency. It is argued further that, to achieve SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities) accountability as stipulated in the legislative frameworks should be conducted to fulfil the assigned and accepted duties depending on how the public resources have been used (Khalo et al. 2007:100). This discussion, therefore, appeals to the moral conscience of government officials at all the three levels of government to exercise good governance in their execution of public duties. This is fundamental for realising Sustainable Development Goal 10, which aims to reduce inequalities in South Africa.

#### **Need for ethical leadership**

Achieving SDG 10 through responsive and ethical public procurement systems demands ethical leadership that subscribes to good morals and has values that support development, as compared to the abuse of public resources. A study by Jarbandhan (2023) demonstrates that effective leadership stands a chance to provide high-quality state responsiveness, which culminates in efficient delivery of public goods and services in the public sector. Arguably, to combat corruption in the procurement systems in South Africa, higher levels of ethical leadership need to be exercised at the individual, community and national levels. Madonsela (2010), in delivering her speech in Nigeria, noticed that three dimensions of what she called the human combating element should be available to curb corruption. These are individual, community value, and political will. The presence of these elements can assist in combating corruption. Most service delivery challenges result from a lack of ethical standards exhibited by officials. Public officials must follow the Batho Pele Principles, which outline how the public should be handled in an open and accountable way, as

well as the code of behaviour for how they should perform their duties. Social accountability of officials to communities is important in safeguarding democracy and citizen rights in terms of service delivery (Pillay 2004).

### Utilising new technologies to curb corruption

The use of modern technologies to curb corruption in public procurement could be another way of achieving SDG 10 in South Africa. For instance, research by Shava and Mhlanga (2023) demonstrated that utilising blockchain in public financial systems can help minimise corruption. This was echoed by Zindi (2024), who observes that blockchain is critical as it helps record all public sector transactions, minimising the chances of corruption. Based on Madonsela's (2010) speech in Nigeria, we argue that anti-corruption agencies need to be established in the South African public sector to help ease corruption. Fraud detectors and corruption detectors need to be put in place to minimise the rate of corruption; however, other critical thinkers suggest that the monitoring and evaluation of government departments may help in improving the quality of services rendered to communities by local municipalities. It remains a challenge to individuals, communities, and corporations and lawmakers to remain transparent and accountable, which are two important attributes to curbing corruption. Other whistleblowing mechanisms can also help law enforcement to identify corruption and take corrective measures to mitigate corruption in the procurement systems.

### Conclusion

The paper provides more emphasis on public procurement corruption, which affects the capacity of local municipalities to achieve SDG 10. The literature review analysis depicts myriad causes of procurement corruption, which involve the legacy of apartheid, poverty, and political appointments, among others. Corruption in the public procurement systems has led to the deterioration of the moral fabric in the public service and in communities, as well as the poor delivery of services. The rampant unethical and gross misconduct by senior public functionaries discourages the morale of junior staff and impacts negatively on public service provision, which is a challenge towards achieving SDG 10. It is imperative to foster anti-corruption mechanisms such as whistleblowing; monitoring and evaluation structures can assist in fostering transparency, accountability, and good ethical conduct in the local municipalities.

The analysis of findings has shown further that corruption is a universal problem which has affected the capacity of many governments to improve the lives of their citizens. Chances, therefore, are higher in South Africa that if corruption in the procurement systems is curbed, an improved quality of life can be realised in local communities and inequalities can be reduced towards achieving SDG 10. New technologies such as Blockchain can be utilised to detect corrupt tendencies in the public sector procurement and can help improve financial management in local government. Investigations into corruption cases should be made possible by raising public awareness of how to disclose corruption using whistleblowing methods like Hotlines and anonymous tip-offs. While the review of documents revealed that public sector performance and service delivery have been disrupted by political interference, there is a need for government agencies to follow ethical standards and refrain from manipulating hiring practices. Sustainable Development Goal 10 can be achieved; therefore, if local government corruption is reduced, it will help reduce unemployment and poverty in communities and may also lead to the inequitable distribution of resources.

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